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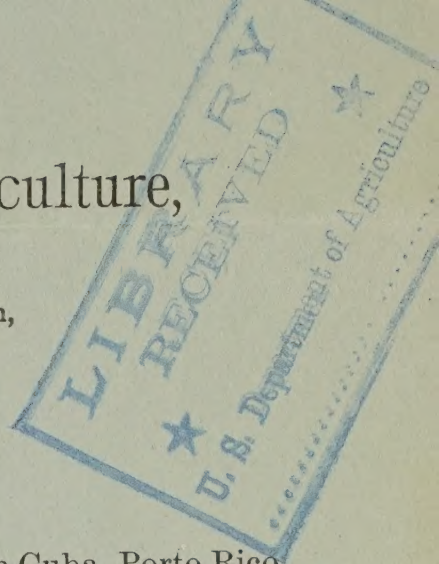
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United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution,

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GUINEA GRASS (*Panicum maximum*).

Guinea grass is a native of Africa and is grown very largely in Cuba, Porto Rico, and other West Indian islands. It was introduced into Florida before 1872 and was common about Mobile, Ala., as early as 1884, and is now grown in a few localities along the Gulf coast westward to southern Texas. It is a perennial which grows in large clumps, producing numerous stems 6 to 10 feet high, with an abundance of very long and tender leaves. Its chief value is as a soiling plant, its habit of growing in clumps making it difficult to use a mowing machine in cutting it for hay. It grows well on ground which is quite dry and succeeds on both the light, sandy soils of Florida and the black, waxy lands of Texas. Guinea grass will probably be found of value on irrigated lands in southern Arizona and California, where it should be fully tested.

It can be propagated by seeds or by divisions of the old plants. The seeds, which are produced in large, loose panicles, ripen very unevenly, but they are found in such quantities that a sufficient supply can be saved with little trouble. Soon after the earliest seeds mature the largest and oldest panicles should be cut and thoroughly dried in the shade, after which the mature seed can be shaken off with a slight beating, a large part of the seed which remains on the panicle being immature and worthless. It is important that seed be saved from the earliest ripening panicles, as that which matures later in the season will seldom make a satisfactory growth. Seed should be sown in February, like cabbage or lettuce seed, and the seedlings will then be ready for planting in the field by April. When planted in the field these seedlings should have the same treatment as is given to roots from old plants. As the seed is often difficult to secure, plantings are commonly made by using small pieces of the large clumps grown the previous season. These clumps may be dug up in the spring and divided into pieces of a single stem each, so that often one hundred or more may be secured from a single clump. In using either seedlings or divisions of the roots the most successful growers plant about 2 feet apart in rows 5 to 6 feet apart, the planting being done in early spring. Two or three cultivations should be given while the grass is becoming established, after which it will care for itself through the remainder of the season. The spaces between the rows should be well plowed every spring, as a loose soil is necessary for a vigorous growth. Fields which are not plowed make less than half the yield secured from those which are given two or three cultivations yearly.

The grass should be cut when from 2 to 3 feet high and before the stems become hard and woody. Under the most favorable conditions such a growth is made in twelve to fourteen days, and wherever the winters are not so severe as to kill the roots from ten to twelve cuttings may be made in a season, though only four or five cuttings will be secured farther north than central Florida. As the grass requires an occasional cultivation to induce a vigorous growth, it is not recommended for grazing; but as it makes a new growth very quickly after being cut and yields more heavily than any other perennial grass, it has great value as a soiling crop, especially where it is desired to secure the largest possible amount of green forage from a limited area. As the roots are killed by even moderate freezing, this grass can not be recommended for planting north of about latitude 30°, or about the north line of Florida.

Guinea grass should not be confounded with Johnson grass, which has sometimes been called by the same name, though it is an entirely different species. Guinea grass produces no underground runners and can be killed by a single cutting off of the crown at the surface of the ground, so it can never become a troublesome weed.

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